

**FREDERICK DOUGLASS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE**

**LONG RANGE INTERPRETIVE PLAN**

**DRAFT FOUNDATION DOCUMENT**

**Foundations for Planning**

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## **FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS**

### **COMPREHENSIVE INTERPRETIVE PLANNING**

The National Park Service (NPS) has adopted a unified planning approach for interpretation and education. This approach combines planning for interpretive media, personal interpretive services, and education programs. The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan (CIP) is the basic planning document for interpretation and was formally adopted as part of NPS guidelines in 1995. Responsibility for creating the CIP lies with each park's superintendent.

#### **What is a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan?**

The CIP process helps parks make choices. It provides guidance to park staff by clarifying objectives, identifying audiences, and recommending the best mix of media and personal services to use to convey park themes.

Although the CIP as defined in Director's Order 6 is composed of specific elements, good planning is customized to meet each park's needs and situation. The CIP is not a recipe. Rather, it is a guide to effective, goal-driven planning. While it considers past interpretive programming, it is primarily a forward-looking document that concentrates on actions needed to create or sustain a vigorous and effective interpretive program for the future. All CIPs have three components: the Long Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP), a series of Annual Implementation Plans (AIP) and an Interpretive Database (ID).

#### **What is a Long Range Interpretive Plan?**

The heart of the CIP is the Long Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP). The LRIP defines the overall vision and long-term (5-7 year) interpretive goals of the park. The process that develops the LRIP defines realistic strategies and actions that work toward achievement of the interpretive goals.

#### **The Annual Implementation Plan and Interpretive Database**

The completed LRIP is a critical part of the CIP, but it does not stand alone. Actions in the LRIP are divided into annual, achievable steps and reproduced in the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP), the second component of the CIP. Creating a series of these AIPs that implement the actions outlined in the LRIP simplifies the park's annual planning process. The third component of the CIP is the Interpretive Database (ID), an ongoing compilation of information, reports, bibliographies, plans, and inventories that document the process of developing the LRIP.

## **SITE BACKGROUND**

The Frederick Douglass National Historic Site (FRDO) is a memorial to one of the most influential Americans of the 1800s. As a political activist, orator, and editor, Frederick Douglass played an important role in the struggle to overthrow slavery. As a public official, he helped lead the nation along the long, painful path toward civil rights for all Americans.

John W. Van Hook was the first owner of the house and property that is now the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site. On May 15, 1854, Van Hook and several partners purchased from Enoch Tucker over 240 acres in the Anacostia community of the District of Columbia with the intent of developing its real estate potential. The hill on which the Douglass home stands was called “Cedar Hill.” Construction of the handsome brick house, with its commanding view of Washington, probably began about 1855. The partners had sold half of their 700 lots by midsummer, 1854, and Van Hook’s house reflected the financial success of the venture. The builder and architect are unknown.

The property remained in the hands of Van Hook until it was sold at public auction, bought by the Freedman’s Saving and Trust Company. In 1877, Frederick Douglass purchased Cedar Hill. During his time there, he added an addition to the house and continued to add what were considered modern upgrades to the house over his lifetime. It remained his home until his death in 1895. Douglass’ second wife, Helen Pitts, realizing the significance of Douglass’ accomplishments, dedicated herself to the task of preserving his home intact as a memorial. She organized the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association, which was chartered in 1900. The National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC) joined forces in 1916 and the mortgage was paid off sometime between 1918 and 1921. In 1921-22, the NACWC raised funds for restoration of the home and an extensive development of the grounds of the estate. The two organizations administered the Douglass home from 1903 to 1962, when the property was conveyed to the United States.

After extensive restoration, the Frederick Douglass home reopened as a National Park Service site in 1972. The Visitor Center opened to the public in 1982. In 1988, Douglass’ home was officially designated as a National Historic Site. The site is administered by National Capital Parks–East (NACE).

## **ENABLING LEGISLATION**

On November 6, 1969, Congress approved the Enabling Legislation for Frederick Douglass National Historic Site in Public Law 87-633: 76 Stat. 435:

“The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to designate, for preservation as a part of the park system in the National Capital Region, the former home of Frederick Douglass located at 1411 W Street, Southeast, Washington, District of Columbia and known as ‘Cedar Hill’ . . .

“ . . . and shall be subject to the provisions of the act entitled, ‘act to establish a National Park Service and for other purposes,’ approved August 25, 1916 (39 Stat. 535), as amended and supplemented and

“The Act entitled ‘act to provide for the preservation of American sites, buildings, objects, and antiquities of national significance, and for other purposes, August 21, 1935 (49 Stat. 666), as amended.

“Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, ‘That section 4 of the act entitled ‘An act to provide for the establishment of the Frederick Douglass home as a part of the park system in the National Capital, and for other purposes,’ approved September 5, 1962 (76 Stat. 435), is amended to read as follows:

“Sec. 4. There are authorized to be appropriated such sums, but not more than \$413,000 as may be needed for the restoration and development of buildings and grounds at Cedar Hill, approved November 6, 1969.”

On February 12, 1988, the Secretary of the Interior redesignated the site as the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site.

## **NATIONAL CAPITAL PARKS–EAST VISION STATEMENT**

National Capital Parks–East is one of the jewels of the National Park System that is managed and promoted by consummate professionals dedicated to conserving resources and providing safe and enjoyable experiences. We strive to inspire this and future generations to recognize, understand, conserve and protect our natural, cultural and recreational resources.

## **PURPOSE**

Park purpose statements describe why a site was set aside and what specific purposes exist for it. They are derived from legislation, legislative history, public participation, and public rule making. Purpose statements may reflect upon traditional purposes of preservation and enjoyment, the linkages between the management unit and its cultural and natural resources, connections with groups and areas external to the park, and language of the enabling legislation.

The purpose of the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site is to collect, preserve, and interpret the house, the museum collections, and the grounds in accordance with the site's enabling legislation, planning documents, and legal mandates.

## **STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Park significance statements describe the distinctiveness of the combined resources of a park. The statements can reflect natural, cultural, scientific, recreational, inspirational, and other resources. They embody the power of the place, and describe the stories that can be told at the site and nowhere else. These statements summarize the essence of the importance of the park's resources to our natural and cultural heritage. Significances may evolve over time as a result of discoveries and updates to knowledge about the place.

The Frederick Douglass National Historic Site is significant because:

- The Cedar Hill estate, with rooms that are furnished to an extraordinary extent with an extremely potent and powerful collection of authentic Douglass objects, reveals the many facets of Douglass the man: intellectual, advocate, activist, statesman, ambassador, writer, orator, musician, family man, friend, colleague, farmer, and Victorian gentleman.
- Cedar Hill, with its landscape, home, and rich collection of original Douglass objects that embody the power of the place, challenges and inspires us as a tangible symbol of the social revolution in 19th-century America. That revolution saw Frederick Douglass rise from the status of a slave, the property of others, to a respected, wealthy, influential property owner, one of the most prominent African Americans of his time.
- Frederick Douglass built and worked with a powerful network of vibrant leaders whose inspirational fight for social justice continues to inspire us today. These leaders included Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Harriet Tubman and Senator Blanche K. Bruce.
- A visit to the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, a symbol of African American achievement against overwhelming odds, offers visitors

of every race an opportunity for a personally transcendent spiritual experience.

- Frederick Douglass' Cedar Hill, in the heart of historic Anacostia, is an icon of American history and serves as both a steadying influence and a catalyst for change in the community.
- Frederick Douglass' significance to American history sparked visionary grassroots preservation efforts, led by the Frederick Douglass Memorial and Historical Association and the National Associations of Colored Women's Clubs, on behalf of his Anacostia home. These groups created one of the first historic sites dedicated to an African American.

## INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Interpretive themes embody the most important ideas or concepts communicated to the public about a park. They convey the significance of the resource, and highlight the links between tangible elements, intangible meanings, and universal concepts that are inherent in the park's resources. The themes connect resources to larger processes, systems, ideas, and values. They define the core content of the educational messages the park offers, and serve as the building blocks upon which interpretive services and educational programs are based.

The primary interpretive themes at Frederick Douglass NHS are nested within a single, overarching universal concept:

- The life and ideals of Frederick Douglass, centered in our nation's 19<sup>th</sup>-century struggle for civil rights and social justice, continue to challenge and inspire us today.

From that universal theme, three primary interpretive themes emerge:

- *The Vision: Frederick Douglass as a great American leader.* Frederick Douglass' broad-ranging advocacy for social justice issues including abolition, civil rights and equal education regardless of race or gender helped to transform a nation struggling to live up to its ideals, and continues to challenge and inspire those who seek freedom and equality today.
- *The Man: Frederick Douglass as one of the nation's most influential African Americans.* The story of Frederick Douglass' journey from enslavement to prominence, achieved against overwhelming odds, challenges and inspires us to work untiringly to achieve our own aspirations.

- *The Place and its Contents: Cedar Hill.* On a hilltop overlooking the District of Columbia, Frederick Douglass' estate, including its extensive collection of original Douglass objects, symbolizes his unparalleled success and embodies the heights to which the "Sage of Anacostia" rose by the end of his life, inspiring Americans to preserve his home and continue his legacy.

Each primary interpretive theme embodies an infinite number of stories. Some of these include:

- *Theme 1 stories centered on "The Vision:"*
  - Douglass' causes and ideals, including justice, civil rights, human dignity, abolition, women's suffrage, equal education, self-actualization, and determination;
  - The incredible network of activists that he created as they fought together for freedom and equality;
  - His continuing inspirational role as 21<sup>st</sup>-century Americans work for equal rights for all.
- *Theme 2 stories centered on "The Man:"*
  - Douglass' life as intellectual, advocate, activist, statesman, ambassador, writer, orator, musician, family man, friend, colleague, farmer, and Victorian gentleman
  - His life journey from slave to revered leader, a truly self-made man;
  - His life as an "everyday," accessible family man, yet a driven, self-motivated challenger, agitator, and fighter;
  - His life as inspiration to those who struggle to achieve their goals.
- *Theme 3 stories centered on "The Place:"*
  - Symbolism
    - Cedar Hill and its contents as the perfect vantage point from which to view Douglass' journey
    - The skyline, encompassing phases of Douglass' life from slavery in Maryland to office holder in the nation's capital;
    - The Growlery contrasted with Cedar Hill as a symbol of his life's journey;
    - His choice of Cedar Hill in a white neighborhood with anti-black covenants as a symbol and message to the world of his fame, achievements and financial success;
    - Cedar Hill, always respected and honored as an anchor of the Anacostia community.
  - Inspiration
    - The idea of pilgrimage – coming to this "place" -- Cedar Hill -- for inspiration in our own lives;
    - The idea of Cedar Hill as a mecca for people of all walks of life in Douglass' day;

- A preservation movement led by prominent Black organizations that created the nation's first historic site dedicated to an African American.
- Victorian life at Cedar Hill
  - The way different rooms highlight different facets of Douglass' life;
  - The history and physical reality of 19<sup>th</sup>-century D.C.;
  - The opportunity to be immersed in the features of Douglass' upscale 19<sup>th</sup>-century Victorian home and lifestyle.

## MANAGEMENT GOALS

These goals describe management's intent in offering interpretive and educational programs and services. They are based on NPS' Five Tenets Centennial Challenge.

*Goal #1, Agency-wide: Stewardship.* At FRDO: Develop stewards who will fight for preservation of the house, its contents and grounds. Ensure that the landscape is protected from zoning changes; make sure zoning laws protect the site. Create and maintain a vibrant volunteer program (VIP).

*Goal #2, Agency-wide: Environmental leadership.* At FRDO: New construction will be on the leading edge of sound environmental practices. Ensure that interpretive programs include these leading edge environmental programs and practices.

*Goal #3, Agency-wide: Recreational experience.* At FRDO: Bring back the sense of play. Have programs that reflect Frederick Douglass' interest in physical health and recreation. Look for ways to connect the FRDO site to bike trails and pedestrian pathways.

*Goal #4, Agency-wide: Education.* At FRDO: Develop literacy and outreach programs. For example: Have swearing in of new US citizens take place at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site. Program evaluation: Evaluate how well staff is supported and trained and how well they subsequently perform. Use current and emerging technology to broaden the impact of educational programming.

*Goal #5, Agency-wide: Professional excellence (partnerships and philanthropy).* At FRDO: partner with sister parks, international partners, Sites of Conscience.

Additional goals to be addressed specifically by the Long Range Interpretive Plan include:

- Shape interpretive program in light of Cedar Hill's recent renovation
- Create development plan for new property across the street from parking lot
- Address the need for classroom/programming space
- Address most appropriate use for the "cottage"



- Upgrade Visitor Center exhibits
- Review effectiveness of the film
- Address site wayfinding issues
- Evaluate the visitor experience
- Evaluate opportunities for outreach.
- Ensure that LRIP process results in elements needed for interpretive component of the upcoming reaccreditation assessment by the American Association of Museums
- Reinforce Douglass's significance, not just to African-American history, but to American history
- Look ahead to the commemoration of the upcoming Bicentennial of Douglass' birth (in 2018)

## **VISITOR EXPERIENCE OBJECTIVES**

Statements of desired visitor experiences describe how the park's interpretation and education program facilitates intellectual, inspirational, emotional and physical experiences for visitors. These statements describe what visitors to the park would like to learn, feel, do, or experience when visiting the park (either in person or remotely).

All visitors are seeking something of value for themselves. The visitor defines what that value is for him/herself. Visitor experience goals describe what experiences and opportunities should be available to the average visitor on an average day, whether or not the visitor chooses to experience them.

Three different levels of visitor experience must be addressed.

1. The Visitors' Bill of Rights: these are experiences a visitor should expect in every park (common to all parks). They include the opportunity to make intellectual, emotional, and/or spiritual connections to the site's resources; to be able to get information easily; and to be safe. (See Appendix A for a more complete list of these experiences.)
2. What do visitors seek that is specific to this park?
3. What do specific audiences particularly seek from this park? Audience segments at FRDO include:
  - General audience. They need universally accessible programs and services.
  - Educational groups. They need curriculum-based programs and services.
  - Repeat visitors from the neighboring community. They need special programs to keep them coming back.
  - Educators. They need curriculum support and "train the trainer" programming.

Experiences are categorized in four different ways. Each of these categories must be considered when developing visitor experience goals.

1. COGNITIVE OR INTELLECTUAL GOALS that involve KNOWLEDGE and allow people to THINK and LEARN.
2. EMOTIONAL OR INSPIRATIONAL GOALS that involve ATTITUDES AND VALUES and allow people to FEEL.
3. ACTION-ORIENTED GOALS that involve ACTIVITY and allow people to DO and PARTICIPATE.
4. EXPERIENTIAL OR SENSORY GOALS that involve THE SENSES (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste) and allow people to IMMERSE THEMSELVES IN THE EXPERIENCE.

The group developed the following visitor experience objectives for the general audience:

- Cognitive
  - Visitors want to learn about family and home life at Cedar Hill.
  - Visitors want to learn about one of the most charismatic leaders ever generated from the locale of the nation's capital.
  - Visitors want to learn about some of the life experiences of Frederick Douglass that helped shape who he was.
- Emotional
  - Visitors want to make a connection by walking where Frederick Douglass walked.
  - Visitors want to leave their cares at the bottom of the hill, as they ascend to the front door.
  - Visitors want to empower themselves and continue their own betterment after witnessing what Frederick Douglass overcame.
  - Visitors want to feel a personal connection between their own personal struggles and those of Frederick Douglass, and to realize their own ability to triumph and be inspired.
  - Visitors want to be inspired by Douglass' journey.
- Action-oriented
  - Visitors want to write their own personal ideals like Douglass and share them with others.
  - Visitors want to sit on the porch in a rocking chair.
  - Visitors want to volunteer and carry on Frederick Douglass' legacy.
  - Visitors want to have hands-on experiences.
  - Visitors want to work in the garden.
- Experiential
  - Visitors want to touch items that belonged to Frederick Douglass.
  - Visitors want to hear the words of Douglass in a compelling format.
  - Visitors want to trek the hallways that Douglass walked, experiencing the dichotomy between the plush surroundings he earned and the spartan existence he overcame to get there.
  - Visitors want to see the view of Washington, D.C., from the front porch.
  - Visitors want to view some of the landmarks that Douglass saw when he lived at Cedar Hill.

## ISSUES AND INFLUENCES AFFECTING INTERPRETATION

This section includes long-range service-wide initiatives, influences and opportunities inside and outside the park, resource-based issues, and internal issues that affect interpretation and education. Collectively, it reflects the perspectives of NPS upper management, FRDO staff members, and the site's group of stakeholders.

### Issues

- Geography: the physical, as well as the geography of the mind. Anacostia is difficult to reach from D.C./northern Virginia/Maryland except by car. Public transit is complex from downtown Washington, requiring three different buses.
- More serious is its perception as an unsafe neighborhood.
- There is a need for improved public relations re: the location; e.g., it is becoming more walkable.
- There is a need for more walk-around tours on site, especially when visitors cannot access the house.
- There is a need for better wayfinding signage on site and for guiding visitors to the site from all directions.
- There is a need to build strategic capacity through better use of technology and resources.
- There is a need to expand the footprint of the Visitor Center to create more useable spaces.
- There is a need to mitigate the Visitor Center's uninviting, bunker-like appearance.
- Accessibility to all visitors needs to be improved through universal design concepts, removing all barriers to communication.
- There is a need to bring resources to audiences who cannot access all or parts of the site, using both high and low-tech solutions.
- There is a need for language-free interpretation that relies on tactile elements and pictures for access by ESL and cognitively disabled individuals.
- There is a need for curriculum-based programs, perhaps through collaboration with other sites, Junior Ranger, etc. These programs would compete well for funding.
- There is a need for a volunteer program that would enhance visitor access to FRDO resources.
- There is a need to raise FRDO's profile within NPS management. The site has great integrity – it is a jewel among parks.
- There is a need to engage youth in meaningful ways. For example, different generations respond to different media.
- There is a need for a very strong, comprehensive training program for anyone who works at the site and does programming.
- There is a need for baseline data on who does/does not visit the site, addressing both physical and virtual visitation.
- There is a need for ongoing evaluation of programming.
- There is a need to get the local community more involved in the site.

## Concerns

- The site is more than its remarkable collection of objects. Visitors should have access to the larger, meaningful stories present there.
- The elements of Frederick Douglass' stories that have contemporary relevance should be emphasized.
- The site should interpret Douglass' whole life, not just certain aspects. For example, he led the fight against lynching.
- The Visitor Center film is out-dated.
- Do not enhance marketing efforts without building capacity first.
- The site cannot do everything. Prioritize, analyze relative costs, and develop strategic capacity that will allow more to be accomplished.
- The LRIP must be a functional tool for delivering effective interpretive services.

## Opportunities. The LRIP opens opportunities:

- For audiences to realize that Frederick Douglass is not just a great black American, but a great American.
- To enhance site visibility by inviting President Obama to come for a visit.
- To offer neighborhood literacy programs in Douglass' honor.
- To use site's incredible collection of original Douglass objects in innovative ways, encouraging visitor access to the objects.
- To allow exploration of the collection through Please Touch reproductions and replicas.
- To connect Douglass' story with those of other famous Americans in the D.C. area (ex.: Lincoln, Clara Barton, etc.)
- To explore opportunities that encourage audiences to create their own interpretive content.
- To connect with other sites that interpret the Civil War to create a Washington-based cooperative consortium.
- To conduct focus groups with children to determine their tastes and desires.
- To reach out to the neighborhood children, if spaces and resources could be made available.
- To conduct focus groups with commercial guided tour managers, in order to determine how to serve them better.
- To welcome and enhance the visits of people with cognitive disabilities.
- To engage the public through social media.
- To publicize the site via NACE's Twitter account.(DCParksEastNPS).

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

### **The Setting**

The Frederick Douglas National Historic Site is located in the Anacostia area of the District of Columbia, at 14<sup>th</sup> and W Streets. The Frederick Douglas home, at the crest of what is known as Cedar Hill, overlooks a view of downtown Washington, D.C.

The house was recently extensively renovated for the first time since it opened to the public as a National Park Service site in 1972. This \$2.7 million project, which began in March 2004 and concluded in January 2007, included HVAC system replacement; design and installation of an environmental monitoring system; window repair; shutter replacement; completion of paint and wallpaper study; the purchase and installation of new reproduction historic wallpaper; exterior painting, window rehabilitation and roof replacement on the caretaker's cottage; mold remediation; painting of the interior and exterior of the Douglass home; design and installation of a fire protection system; rehabilitation of the park road and parking lot; replacement of underground drainage pipes; and assessment of the entire Douglass book collection and conservation of a portion of that collection. A paint analysis June 2004 led the NPS to change the exterior color from white to the dark beige that appeared beginning in 1892-93, the last color that Frederick Douglass painted his house before his death in 1895. The house is now interpreted to the year of his death.

The FDNHS web site provides driving directions from downtown Washington, DC via I-295 and I-495/95. Typical brown historic site signs are evident once drivers leave the interstate, but the closer one drives to the site, the fewer are the signs. Adequate parking is available immediately next to the Visitor Center.

The site is also accessible via public transit, by taking the Metro and buses. A bus stops directly in front of the Frederick Douglas home, about a block from the Visitor Center, where the visitor experience begins.

The Anacostia neighborhood is in transition. At one time, it may not have been considered safe for visitors, but this is changing. Incidents that threaten visitor safety occur infrequently. The site faces a challenge in communicating to the general public that they will have a safe and enjoyable experience when they visit.

### **Information and Orientation**

Visitors can access information about directions, tours, ticketing, hours of operation, facilities, and programming on the Frederick Douglas National Historic Site website ([www.nps.gov/frdo](http://www.nps.gov/frdo)). The website explains the tour format, which includes guided tours of the house and self-guided tours of the grounds, and invites visitors to purchase tickets online or over the phone. It also cautions visitors about the 85 steps and long ramp leading from the Visitor Center up to the house.

The website also features a number of historical images related to Douglass' life, as well as a beautifully designed and quite extensive "virtual tour," which is really an online

museum exhibit. It also provides a listing of Social Studies curriculum standards for Maryland, Virginia, New York and the District of Columbia, highlighting connections to the Frederick Douglass site, and promoting the annual Douglass Oratorical Contest, in which elementary, junior high and senior high students compete by memorizing and presenting one of Douglass' speeches.

Site personnel indicate that arriving visitors are frequently confused about how to access the site. Visitors often bypass the Visitor Center and climb the steps to the house, only to be sent back to the Visitor Center for ticketing. This is no wonder! The Visitor Center is an off-putting concrete bunker-like structure set into the hillside. Three-dimensional letters bolted to the concrete wall spell out "Frederick Douglass Home Visitor Information Center," and indicate National Park Service jurisdiction, but do nothing to make visitors feel welcome, or to orient them as to their next move. The stairs to the right that lead up the hill to the house are by far the most dominant feature of the entrance plaza, so climbing them seems to the visitor like the correct choice.

The bare concrete wall of the Visitor Center is stained with streaks of rust from the railing that runs along the top. The double door entrance of black, opaque glass is tucked into the corner, and a paper sign in a plastic sheet protector taped to the glass indicates that only one door is working. Nothing about the entrance plaza signals that the visitor is welcome and expected. It looks like a space designed for defense rather than invitation.

The entrance – and the visitor's ability to orient to the site – could be improved with very little investment. The doors should be replaced with transparent glass, so visitors can see inside the well-lit building and recognize that it is both staffed and organized for reception. Lighting should be improved. Most important, a colorful, community-designed mural or silk-screened banners honoring Frederick Douglass on the concrete wall facing the parking lot would not only enliven the entrance plaza and make it more welcoming, but could also involve the neighborhood in honoring its most famous resident. It would also bring publicity to the site, and advertise that it has been newly renovated and is well worth a visit.

Envision how great that would look:



Inside the Visitor Center, visitors may pick up their reserved tickets or purchase tickets for tours on a first-come, first-served basis. They can watch the 17-minute *Fighter for*

*Freedom* orientation film (captioned for hearing impaired visitors); view a limited number of exhibits in this very small space; browse the well-stocked bookstore; and request a brochure for the self-guided walking tour of the grounds.

Reservations are required for groups of 11 or more. There is a 60 person maximum on all group tours; a group of that size is split into smaller groups for a safer, more comfortable fit as they tour the historic house. The price per visitor is \$1.50. Five or six group tours are scheduled each day, depending on the season. They are available to school groups as well as general visitors. Unfortunately, many visitors, unaware that reservations for the group tour are advisable, arrive to find the guided tours fully booked. These visitors are not able to access the house, and they miss out on the excellent ranger-led tours. While they can still walk the grounds with the self-guiding brochure, and see the film and the Visitor Center exhibits, they do not receive the full benefit of the interpretive message.

### **The Audience**

The site has been receiving an average of about 36,000 visitors per year for the last decade. Visitation in 2008 was 37,852, and visits so far in 2009 indicate a 16% increase over last year. Visitation is highest in July, but the spring months are also strong, due in part to school groups. A detailed survey of visitors has not been conducted at the site since 1992.

### **The Interpretive Experience**

Depending upon whether visitors are able to take the guided tour of the house, their visit to the site varies drastically. Ideally, they have called ahead to reserve spots for one of the scheduled tours offered daily. Arriving at the Visitor Center, they view the orientation film and a small number of exhibits on Frederick Douglass' life. The film, while well done for its time, has become outdated, with production values that no longer meet current standards. The exhibit space is very small, with outmoded exhibits installed nearly 30 years ago. There is no space for changing exhibits that could highlight objects from the site's extensive collection, which is housed offsite at NCR's Museum Resource Center. The bookstore offers a good selection of Douglass-related material for adults and children, as well as items related to African American history and culture.

The trek to the house where the tour begins is a steep one: 85 steps and a long ramp. But wheelchair users can take a longer inclined sidewalk that starts from the parking lot and circles around to the house from the back. The Visitor Center, grounds and first floor of the historic home are handicapped accessible; a binder of images of second floor features is available for those unable to climb the stairs.

Visitors are asked to gather on the front porch of Cedar Hill to begin their tour. The rangers who guide the tours are adept at adapting tour content to the specific interests of the group. Since most of the objects in the house belonged to Douglass when he lived in the house, visitors are treated to an authentic look at his life and times. Each room allows tour guides to focus on a different aspect of Douglass' life: the parlor for his distinguished circle of visitors and his influence on the nation and the world, the music room for his wide array of talents, his study for his influential writings, the kitchen for his

insistence on the latest conveniences, and the second floor bedrooms with their focus on his family, especially the grandchildren who frequented Cedar Hill. With the tour complete, visitors are free to walk the grounds and enjoy the spectacular view of Washington, D.C., featuring the U.S. Capitol Building and the Washington Monument.

### **Personnel**

The staffing plan for the site includes a site manager, two full-time GS-025-05 to 09 Rangers, a curator, two Park Guides and a few Student Temporary employees. In addition the site will gain a half-time administrative assistant who will be shared with Fort Dupont. Currently the site is not fully staffed, but recruitment is underway to fill vacancies.

### **Interpretive Facilities and Resources**

The site suffers from a lack of program space. The only program space currently available is the auditorium in the Visitor Center. When this space is in use for programs, the orientation film cannot be made available to other visitors.

Offices for site personnel are located in a small cottage located directly behind Cedar Hill. The space is cramped and inadequate for the number of people stationed there. The cottage is not original to Douglass' time. It was built in 1922 to serve as a residence for a caretaker. The site has recently acquired a property directly across the street from the parking lot. This residential building may hold promise, either as program space, or for offices, freeing up the cottage for programs or additional exhibits.

### **Partnerships**

Since 2008, the site has partnered for the past three years with Ford's Theatre, Tudor Place Historic House and President Lincoln's Cottage to form the Civil War Washington Teacher Fellows consortium. The informal group offers two five-day teacher seminars each summer. The seminars are intended to help improve understanding and appreciation for Civil War Washington, while teaching educators innovative methods to use in the classroom when teaching about the Civil War. In September 2009, the group also collaborated with a few other NPS and independent historic sites to offer a teacher preview evening for teachers from the D.C. metro area. Over 100 teachers attended. This partnership continues to improve and is in the process of seeking a sustainable funding source.

The site has also partnered with the Anacostia Museum, which started a pilot shuttle program to bring visitors from the mall area downtown to Southeast Washington. The shuttle stopped multiple times on weekend days at the Anacostia Metro, Anacostia Museum and Frederick Douglass NHS. In addition both sites have partnered on programming for special events.